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An Overview of Social Psychological Approaches to the Study of Bargaining

The major task we have set ourselves in this book is to review, and at least partially integrate, the rather voluminous bargaining research that has emerged since about 1960. Before turning to this task, however, it may be useful to obtain a more general picture of social psychological approaches to the study of bargaining. What, for example, are some of the major research paradigms developed and used by social psychologists in order to analyze the bargaining process? To what extent do these paradigms contain the prominent characteristics of bargaining relationships, described in Chapter 2? How have social psychologists typically assessed bargaining effectiveness? Or, to put it another way, what kinds of dependent variables have bargaining researchers typically employed? Finally, what factors (independent variables) have typically been studied with respect to their effects on bargaining effectiveness? It is to the end of answering these questions, and thereby laying the groundwork for a closer analysis of the bargaining literature, that the present chapter is directed.

SOME MAJOR BARGAINING RESEARCH PARADIGMS

At first glance it would appear that almost as many different methodological paradigms have been devised for the study of bargaining as there are researchers themselves. Each experimenter begins with his own set of constraints, assumptions, and interests; each is curious about the effects and effectiveness of a particular constellation of variables; and each carries with him into the research enterprise a particular methodological uniqueness and